Citizen Science Projects (MOOC) 1.13

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In the last step, you saw some examples of research questions selected by different citizen observatories. Now, let's find out how you can design your own project once you have identified a relevant question.

There are several aspects you need to think about when designing a project. We'll be coming back to these a lot during the course, so don't worry if you do not have all the answers now. Think of this as a helpful checklist that you can fill in as your ideas develop:

##Who is your main audience?

Is your project open to anyone or are you targeting a specific group of people, such as students in schools, a bird-watching community or a local pollution action group? Knowing this group will help to think about how you advertise your project and how you will communicate with your participants (see the next question!).

##How will you communicate with participants during the project?

What form of communication will you use with participants? For example, you could use email, text messages, social media, newsletters, face-to-face meetings or a dedicated platform for communication. Some citizen science projects have a dedicated platform, such as Zooniverse. Near real-time visualisations of the data, such as showing data on a map, can be a great way to

communicate progress during a project to show collective progress; sharing the data back can also provide a sense of ownership.

##How long will your campaign run for?

You need to decide if yours is a:

+one-off event taking place over a single day or a weekend

+a longer-term campaign that may run for weeks or months

+a continuous campaign that has no fixed end date

+or a series of small campaigns that take place over time

This decision is related to the question that you are asking and how to measure it: do you want to establish only the current status of an issue or to monitor changes over time?

##What is the geographical scope of your campaign?

Your campaign may be focused locally, or you might want to collect data globally. You'll need to decide the geographical boundaries of your project so that you can advertise it appropriately and then reach the right audience.

##Is the project online or field-based?

Projects can run from your desktop in a web browser, like armchair mapping of buildings and streets for Humanitarian OpenStreetMap after a big event like a hurricane, or classifying objects in one of the many Zooniverse citizen science projects. Or, you might send people out into the field to make observations. This all depends on the type of data that you need to collect.

##What is required of participants?
What is it that you want participants to do? You need to outline the tasks clearly and, if required, provide protocols for data collection to make sure that the data are comparable in quality to those collected by scientists. For example, if measuring air quality, all participants should be using calibrated sensors that measure the same indicators with the same accuracy. Do participants need any equipment for the task, and who will supply it? Or, is there a DIY element to the task that requires some personal funding by the participants (e.g. an attachment or app for their phones)? If the task is difficult, will it require training? Is there an introductory event that they will need to attend to take part?

##What are the incentives for participation?

Although we will discuss engaging participants later in the course, you need to think about what motivates your participants and why they would want to participate in the project.